





# E P I S T L E

T O

## A F R I E N D,

ON THE DEATH OF

*JOHN THORNTON, Esq.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF

*"AN EPISTLE TO AN EMINENT PAINTER."*

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CUJUS EGO INTERITU TOTA DE MENTE FUGAVI  
HÆC STUDIA, ATQUE OMNES DELICIAS ANIMI.

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NOTESCATQUE MAGIS MORTUUS ATQUE MAGIS.

CATULLUS.

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THE THIRD EDITION.

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ON THE DEATH OF

W M H E G

BY THE AUTHOR

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## E P I S T L E, &c.

**I**N vain, dear Monitor, thy kind desire  
To wake the embers of poetic fire !  
To clear the mind, where Grief's dark shadows lower,  
And Fancy dies by Sorrow's freezing power !  
In vain would Friendship's clearing voice suggest      5  
Her flattering visions to the Poet's breast ;  
That public favor calls, with just demand,  
Th' expected volume from his lingering hand :  
Lost are those anxious hopes, that eager pride,  
With thee, my THORNTON, they declin'd, they died. 10

Friend of my opening soul ! whose love began  
 To hail thy Poet, ere he rank'd as man !  
 Whose praise, like dew-drops, which the early morn  
 Sheds with mild virtue on the vernal thorn,  
 Taught his young mind each swell of thought to shew, 15  
 And gave the germs of fancy strength to blow !  
 Dear, firm associate of his studious hour,  
 Who led his idler step to Learning's bower !  
 Tho' young, imparting to his giddier youth  
 Thy thirst of science, and thy zeal for truth ! 20  
 Ye towers of Granta, where our friendship grew,  
 And that pure mind expanded to my view,  
 Our love fraternal let your walls attest,  
 Where Attic joys our letter'd evening blest ;  
 Where midnight, from the chains of sleep reliev'd, 25  
 Stole on our social studies unperceiv'd !

But

But not, my THORNTON ! in that calm alone  
 Was thy mild genius, thy warm virtue known :  
 When manhood mark'd the hour for busy strife,  
 And led us to the crowded maze of life, 30  
 Where honours dearly bought, and golden spoil,  
 Tempt not the careless Bard who shrinks from toil,  
 And whence to sweet retirement's soothing shade,  
 Love and the Muse thy willing friend convey'd ;  
 Thy soul, more firm to join the struggling crowd, 35  
 To nobler Themis toilsome homage vow'd,  
 With zeal, devoting to her sacred throne  
 A heart as uncorrupted as her own.  
 Still as thy mind, with manly powers endued,  
 The opening path of active life pursued, 40  
 And round the ripening field of busines rang'd,  
 Thy heart, unwarp'd, unharden'd, unestrang'd,

To early friendship still retain'd its truth,

With all the warm integrity of youth.

Whene'er affliction's force thy friend opprest,

45

Thou wer'st the rock on which his cares might rest;

From thy kind words his rising hopes would own

The charm of reason in affection's tone.

Where is the soothing voice of equal power,

To take it's anguish from the present hour?

50

Beneath the pressure of a grief so just,

The lenient aid of books in vain I trust:

They, that could once the war of thought controul,

And banish discord from the jarring soul,

Now irritate the mind, they used to heal,

55

They speak too loudly of the loss I feel.

Thou faithful censor of the Poet's strain,

No more shalt thou his sinking hope sustain,

No.

No more, with ardent zeal's enlivening fire,  
 Call from inglorious shades his silent lyre : 60  
 No more, as in our days of pleasure past,  
 The eye of judgment o'er his labors cast ;  
 Keen to discern the blemishes, that lurk  
 In the loose texture of his growing work ;  
 Eager to praise, yet resolute to blame,  
 Kind to his verse, but kinder to his fame. 65

How may the Muse, who prosper'd by thy care,  
 Now meet the public eye without despair ?  
 Now, if harsh censures on her failings pour,  
 Her warmest advocate can speak no more : 70  
 Cold are those lips, which breath'd the kind defence,  
 If spleen's proud cavil strain'd her tortur'd sense ;  
 Which bade her song to public praise aspire,  
 And call'd attention to her trembling lyre.

Ah !

Ah ! could she now, thus petrified with grief, 75  
 Find in some lighter lay a vain relief,  
 Still must she deem such verse, if such could be,  
 A wound to friendship, and a crime to thee ;  
 Profanely utter'd at this sacred time,  
 When thy pale corse demands her plaintive rhyme, 80  
 And Virtue, weeping whom she could not save,  
 Calls the just mourner to thy recent grave.

Hail hallow'd vault ! whose darksome caverns hold  
 A frame, though mortal, of no common mould ;  
 A heart scarce fullied with a human flaw, 85  
 Which shun'd no duty, and transgres'd no law ;  
 In joy still guarded, in distress serene,  
 Thro' life a model of the golden mean,  
 Which friendship only led him to transgres,  
 Whose heavenly spirit sanctifies excess. 90

Pure mind! whose meekness, in thy mortal days,  
 Pursuing virtue, still retir'd from praise;  
 Nor wish'd that friendship should on marble give  
 That perfect image of thy worth to live,  
 Which 'twas thy aim alone to leave imprest  
 On the close tablet of her faithful breast.  
 If now her verse against thy wish rebel,  
 And strive to blazon, what she lov'd so well,  
 Forgive the tender thought, the moral song,  
 Which would thy virtues to the world prolong;  
 That, rescued from the grave's oblivious shade,  
 Their useful lustre may be still survey'd,  
 Dear to the pensive eye of fond regret,  
 As light still beaming from a sun that's set.  
 Oft to our giddy Muse thy voice has taught  
 The just ambition of poetic thought;

95

100

105

Bid.

Bid her bold view to latest time extend,

And strive to make futurity her friend.

If any verse, her little art can frame,

May win the partial voice of distant fame,

110

Be it the verse, whose fond ambition tries

To paint thy mind in truth's unfading dyes,

Tho' firm, yet tender, ardent, yet refin'd ;

With Roman strength and Attic grace combin'd.

What tho' undeck'd with titles, power, and wealth, 115

Great were thy generous deeds, and done by stealth ;

For thy pure bounty from observance stole,

Nor wish'd applause, but from thy conscious soul.

Tho' thy plain tomb no sculptur'd form may shew,

No boastful witness of suspected woe ;

120

Yet heavenly shapes, that shun the glare of day,

To that dear spot shall nightly visits pay :

Pale

Pale Science there shall o'er her votary strew  
 Her flow'rs, yet moist with sorrow's recent dew.

There Charity, Compassion's lovely child,

125

In rustic notes pathetically wild,

With grateful blessings bid thy name endure,

And mourn the patron of her village-poor.

E'en from the midnight shew with music gay,

The soul of Beauty to thy tomb shall stray,

130

In sweet distraction steal from present mirth,

To sigh unnotic'd o'er the hallow'd earth,

Which hides those lips, that glow'd with tender fire,

And sung her praises to no common lyre :

But Friendship, wrapt in sorrow's deepest gloom,

135

Shall keep the longest vigils at thy tomb ;

Her wounded breast, disdainful of relief,

There claims a fond præeminence in grief :

She, as the seasons of the year return,  
 Shall place thy fav'rite plants around thy urn, 140  
 Which, in the luxury of tender thought,  
 Her care shall raise, with plaintive emblems wrought,  
 Recalling ever, with remembrance sweet,  
 Thy kind attachment to her calm retreat.

Short was thy life, but ah ! its thread how fine ! 145  
 How pure the texture of the finish'd line !  
 What tho' thy opening manhood could not gain  
 Those late rewards, maturer toils attain ;  
 Hope's firmest promises 'twas thine to raise,  
 That merit's brightest meed would grace thy lengthen'd days ;  
 For thine were Judgment's patient powers, to draw 151  
 Entangled justice from the nets of law ;  
 Thine firm Integrity, whose language clear  
 Ne'er swell'd with arrogance, or shook with fear.

Reason's

Reason's mild power, unvex'd by mental strife,

155

Sway'd the calm current of thy useful life;

Whose even course was in no season lost,

Nor rough with storms, nor stagnated by frost.

In scenes of public toil, or social ease,

'Twas thine by firm sincerity to please;

160

Sweet as the breath of spring thy converse flow'd,

As summer's noon-tide warmth thy friendship glow'd.

O'er thy mild manners, by no art constrain'd,

A pensive, pleasing melancholy reign'd,

Which won regard, and charm'd th' attentive eye,

165

Like the soft lustre of an evening sky:

Yet if perchance excited to defend

The injur'd merit of an absent friend,

That gentle spirit, rous'd to virtuous ire,

Indignant flash'd resentment's noble fire.

170

Tho' just observance in thy life may trace  
 A lovely model of each moral grace,  
 Thy last of days the noblest lesson taught :  
 Severe instruction ! and too dearly bought !  
 Whose force from memory never can depart, 175  
 But while it mends, must agonize the heart.  
 Tho' thy shrunk nerves were destin'd to sustain  
 Th' increasing horrors of slow-wasting pain ;  
 Those spirit-quenching pangs, whose base controul  
 Clouds the clear temper, and exhausts the soul ; 180  
 Yet in that hour, when Death asserts his claim,  
 And his strong summons shakes the conscious frame ;  
 When weaker minds, by frantic fear o'erthrown,  
 Shrink in wild horror from the dread Unknown,  
 Thy firmer soul, with Christian strength renew'd, 185  
 Nor lost in languor, nor by pain subdued,

(While thy cold grasp the hand of Friendship prest,

And her vain aid in fault'ring accents blest)

With awe, but not as Superstition's slave,

Survey'd the gathering shadows of the grave ;

And to thy God, in death, devoutly paid

That calm obedience which thy life display'd.

Thou friend ! yet left me of the choicer few,

Whom grief's fond eyes with growing love review ;

O thou ! whom mutual sorrow will incline

To mix thy sympathetic sighs with mine ;

Still be it ours to pay, with just regret,

At Friendship's sacred shrine our common debt !

Tho' doom'd (so Heaven ordains) to see no more

The gentle Being, whom we both deplore ;

Painting shall still, sweet soothing art ! supply

A form so precious in Affection's eye.

190

195

200

Ah !

Ah ! little thought we, in that happier hour,  
 When our gay Muse rehears'd the Pencil's power ;  
 To mourn that form in cold obstruction laid, 205  
 And see him only by the pencil's aid !  
 Blest be that pencil, every art be blest,  
 That stamps his image deeper on our breast !  
 Oft let us loiter on his favourite hill,  
 Whose shades the sadly-pleasing thought instill ; 210  
 Recount his kindness, as we fondly rove,  
 And meet his spirit in the lonely grove.  
 At evening's pensive hour, or opening day,  
 He yet shall seem the partner of our way.  
 Blest Spirit ! still thro' Fancy's ear impart 215  
 The calm of virtue to the troubled heart !  
 Correct each sordid view, each vain desire,  
 And touch the mortal, with celestial fire !

So may we still, in this dark scene of earth,  
Hold sweet communion with thy living worth; 220  
And, while our purer thoughts thy merit scan,  
Revere the Angel, as we lov'd the Man.

**F I N I S.**

l et l

go þinu me fia  
oðr to ond hib eit mi illi me fia  
oðr. idriw givit yhr ihw folummen frum ihw  
ans trowit yhr að groti trosq me gildu þat  
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